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Marija Maglov

Institute of Musicology SASA, Belgrade, Serbia

In Memoriam Vesna Mikić (1967–2019)

*Dedicated to the Professor, with whom I had
the privilege and fortune to study with*

Professor Dr. Vesna Mikić sadly passed away after the short and difficult illness on October 30, 2019. Her early departure left a void in the community of music and art academicians, where she made significant mark, both as a distinguished scholar and as a much beloved teacher, mentor, and colleague.

Vesna Mikić was Full Professor at the Department of Musicology at the University of Arts, Faculty of Music in Belgrade an institution with which she was affiliated with for almost three decades. In her last years, she served as a Chief of the Department of Musicology, which was one of the many functions she fully committed herself to. In addition, her activities in pedagogy included, over the years, engagements at other institutions: master and doctoral study programmes of Theory of Arts and Media, Digital Art and Polymedia Art at the University of Arts in Belgrade, Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac, the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, the Academy of Arts in Priština, the Music Academy in Cetinje, the Academy of Fine Arts (now the Faculty of Contemporary Arts) in Belgrade, the Music Academy of University of Banja Luka and the Music Academy of “Slobomir” University in Bijeljina. She was a guest lecturer at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris*, the Institute of Musicology at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and the Department of Musicology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Ljubljana.

Active in other roles as a cultural and scientific worker, she was member of the Serbian Musicological Society, Composers’ Association of Serbia and the *Matica Srpska* Department of Performance Arts and Music, as well as founder and director of the Centre for Popular Music Research. The scope of her activities also included engagement with scientific journals, as she was deputy editor-in-chief of the *New Sound Journal of Musicology* and a member of the editorial board of *AM Journal of Art and Media* since it was established. Further, she was an enthusiastic member of programme and

organizational committees of the biennial international scientific conference of the Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music in Belgrade. That initiative force of hers was also behind marking the 70 years since the formation of the Department of Musicology, publishing the thematic monograph *Izazovi savremene muzikologije. Eseji u čast prof. dr Mirjane Veselinović-Hofman* (*Challenges of Contemporary Musicology: Essays in Honor of Professor Dr. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman*) in 2018, as well as an exhibition and public discussion *Iz arhive (1987–2017) međunarodnog naučnog skupa Katedre za muzikologiju i Katedre za etnomuzikologiju* (*From the Archive [1987–2017] of the International Scientific Conference of the Department of Musicology and Department of Ethnomusicology*) on the occasion of marking the 80th anniversary of the Faculty of Music. For these activities and her general contribution to the Faculty, she was posthumously awarded the *Velika plaketa Univerziteta umetnosti* (The Great Plaque of the University of Arts).¹

In her scientific and theoretical work she “boldly broached a whole series of issues that had not been discussed in our contemporary musicological literature and provided a significant impetus for further quests in the field of new media, techno-culture, and popular art”, as was noted by Professor Dr. Sonja Marinković.² This openness towards untraced paths, readiness to set the foot and prepare the ground for further inquiries of the younger generation was one of the mutual features for all the topics she embraced. Among such characteristics, we can also recognise affinity and the sense of musicological duty towards activities of contemporary Serbian composers and, on the other hand, developing inter- and transdisciplinary approaches as a mark of her research and writing style. There is a distinctive easiness with which she moved through vast amount of disciplines, but nevertheless always starting with music as her central concern and showing the potentials of musicology as this interdisciplinary terrain. Mastering this approach seemed almost natural with her playful, witty and brilliantly observant mind. This wittiness, however, was just the first layer of complex analysis she offered, starting from the position of a musicologist who understood music as practice in social, political and cultural contexts.³

As for the vast topics she covered, here I would mark three main lines of her work. The first concerns interest in neoclassicism, which she continually expressed since the days of her final paper and magisterial thesis at the Faculty of Music (written under mentorship of Professor Dr. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, who was also mentor of Mikić’s PhD thesis), culminating in her book *Lica srpske muzike – neoklasicizam* (*Faces of Serbian Music – Neoclassicism*, Belgrade: Faculty of Music: Department of Musicology, 2009). For her PhD thesis, Mikić introduced, among others, the

¹Cf. Bojana Radovanović, “In Memoriam: Vesna Mikić (Beograd, 30. maj 1967 – Beograd, 30. oktobar 2019),” *Musicology* 28, I (2020): 288.

²Sonja Marinković, “In Remembrance of Vesna Mikić (30 may 1967 – 30 October 2019),” *New Sound International Journal of Music* 55, I (2020): 123.

³For the detailed and extensive analysis of Vesna Mikić’s scientific work, research topics and methodologies, see: Biljana Leković, “Musicological Discourse of Vesna Mikić (1967–2019): Characteristics, Effects and Achievements,” *New Sound International Journal of Music* 55, I (2020): 139–78.

term technoculture in Serbian musicology while discussing music and technology, as well as cultural studies in interdisciplinary relation with the discipline of musicology (*Muzika u tehokulturi /Music in Technoculture/*, Belgrade: University of Arts, 2004). The field of electronic and eletroacoustic music remained one of the most fruitful she dealt with. Finally, she found an equally potent field for her curiosity and pioneering spirit within popular music studies, an interdisciplinary field where problems of contemporary society, politics and culture – our contemporary environment for which she had particular awareness and sensibility – intersect. This was especially true for the studies of the Eurovision Song Contest, to which she offered original contributions concerning Serbian and ex-Yugoslav entries. In total, her opus counts for almost 100 published texts, which included “studies, previews, reviews, *lexicographical terms*, interviews, texts on CD editions, introductions for sheet music editions in prestigious domestic or well-known foreign publications such as thematic annuals from national and international conferences on musicology, in the leading magazines, encyclopaedias and monographs”.⁴ In addition to her individual scientific work, she was keen team worker, as was shown in collaborative efforts in many editorial teams she was part of, as well as in papers she co-wrote, especially with younger colleagues.⁵ Mikić was also prolific as a translator (from English and French), affording numerous translations to the *New Sound*,⁶ translating Gerald Abraham’s *Oxford History of Music* (Vol. 2 and 3, Belgrade: Clio, 2002, 2004) and Stuart Borthwick’s and Ron Moy’s *Popular Music Genres: An Introduction* (with Aleksandra Čabraja, Belgrade: Clio, 2010).

The same openness, curiosity, inventiveness and pioneering spirit she manifested in her writing, Mikić showed in her pedagogical activity and the courses she led – and especially those she established and introduced. Her initiatives for introducing topics at the time new in the local academic context resulted in several specific academic courses on the topics of electroacoustic music (which was, of course, present in the courses on the 20th century music history, but she gave accent on music and technology and broader practices of technology in music culture), theory and practice of musicology in media, theories, histories and genres of popular art, culture and music, on art, music and politics, on film and television music, and aspects of 20th and 21st century music.⁷ One of her unfortunately unfinished projects was introduction of the program Studies of (contemporary) Music-Media Cultures (co-created with Branka Popović and Svetlana Savić). Her impetus for working with young researchers and introducing them to various types of scientific work also resulted in the formation of the Centre for Popular Music research, which she founded and was its first director. Finally, her pedagogical work resulted in mentorships on different study levels: 21

⁴ Ibid., 147. See Mikić’s full bibliography in: *ibid.*, 160–77.

⁵ Ibid., 159.

⁶ Cf. Ibid, 177–78.

⁷ For the detailed account, see: Adriana Sabo, “Pedagogical Work of Vesna Mikić,” *New Sound International Journal of Music* 55, I (2020): 124–38.

graduation theses, 16 master theses, three master's theses, and 7 PhD theses.⁸ In 2019, Mikić was mentor of four PhD thesis proposals, accepted by the bodies of the Faculty of Music and University of Arts.

Being one of those students whose proposals she supervised, I feel immense gratitude for having the privilege to study with Professor Mikić. Her abrupt leaving left a void that will be hard to fill, as she had a very unique approach to the students, marked by easiness, warmth, humor and almost informality in communication, and at the same time continuous seriousness and responsibility towards research, learning and work. While studying with her was privilege in a sense of being able to learn from her expertise, it was also fortune to be encouraged by her to embrace new topics, push one's boundaries, learn from errors and strive to always bring better results. Characteristic of Professor Mikić was the dedication of *Lica srpske muzike: neoklasicizam*, wherein she wrote: "To my students, with whom I was lucky to work". Believing that I speak for many of her students touched and changed by her lectures and words, I dedicate this text to the Professor, with whom we were all lucky to study.

⁸ For the list, see: *ibid.*, 134–37.